

Miles City STAR



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LOCAL / MONTANA

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Radio project to be built in eastern Montana

For the Star

The Interoperability Montana (IM) Project Directors decided recently to allocate \$3.5 million in funding to the placement of a second master controller at the new Autovon radio communications site near Glendive.

This equipment provides regional control for the public safety radio communications IM system, which is phasing in major improvements in radio and microwave sites by sharing costs among federal, state, tribal, and local governments.

The first digital master control site, located in Helena, was established as part of the 2005 Lewis and Clark County radio project. In 2006, that master control site was upgraded to add additional features and trunking sites.

In 2007, the State of Montana Legislature approved funding to establish a second master control site in eastern Montana to provide for expansion of the statewide radio system.

"Three potential sites from Billings to Glendive were evaluated by an outside consultant," said IM Executive Director Kevin Bruski. "Then the IM's own technical committee re-evaluated the data and evaluated four additional sites prior to making a final recommendation."

Each proposed facility was evaluated based on a number of variables, such as the availability of electrical service and back-up power; security features; space considerations; earthquake, flood or other disaster mitigation; and other technical and functional

requirements for the equipment.

"We're pleased that the site location ended up near Glendive," said the IM Chair of the Board of Project Directors Alan Michaels, Glendive Police Chief. "Many local agencies worked hard to meet the criteria for locating the site here, and it will have a positive impact on local jurisdictions from Richland to Carter County."

Several tower sites will tie into the master control site, providing a reliable, high-capacity digital microwave backbone that will extend coverage and provide for the secure transport of voice and data communications explained Bruski.

"Plus, the economic impact of locating the site near Glendive should be a positive influ-

ence in the community," he said.

The Interoperability Montana (IM) Project is a cooperative, grassroots approach to improving radio communications and interoperability for all public safety organizations in Montana, including local, state, tribal and federal comprised of law enforcement, fire services, emergency medical services (EMS), public health and medical facilities and others.

The project goal is to establish a statewide communications network based on the Project 25 standard and connected with a high-capacity digital microwave backbone, which will improve radio coverage, quality and dependability. For more information about the IM Project, visit <http://interop.mt.gov>.